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Elementary School Language Textbooks*

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FOREWORD

AT THE annual meeting of The National Conference on Research in English in 1936, a committee was authorized to prepare a summary of the research studies that have dealt with language-composition and grammar textbooks at the elementary school level. This summary was to be published as one of the yearbooks of The Conference.

The report herewith presented constitutes the summary as prepared by the committee. It consists of two parts: first, a bibliography and summary of the published and unpublished studies involving textbooks in English; and second, the report of an original investigation of current practice in using such textbooks.

In canvassing the literature of research concerned with textbooks, the committee located many investigations dealing with textbooks in general or with books used in other curricular fields. The findings in some of these studies seemed to have some bearing on questions of evaluating or of constructing textbooks in English. Several reports of such seemingly pertinent investigations were abstracted, but they

were not considered in the final summary because no objective line of demarcation between pertinent and non-pertinent studies in these related fields could be set up. Moreover, there were found studies that were but partially concerned with English textbooks and that included considerable investigation and data extraneous to the present summary. In order properly to delimit the summary, it was necessary to decide on definite criteria by which to select or to reject the studies that were consulted. The major criteria follow: (a) The book, pamphlet, thesis, or article to be included must be the report of an actual objective investigation, not an academic discussion. (b) The investigation must concern textbooks in language-composition or grammar at the elementary school level. (c) The elementary school is understood to be a six-, seven-, or eight-year school, but in no instance a junior or senior high school. (d) In investigations only partially concerned with textbooks in English, only that portion which deals with such textbooks shall be abstracted. The remainder of the study shall be completely omitted.

The investigations that were located

* The Sixth Annual Research Bulletin of the National Conference on Research in English.

fell into two major classifications: historical development and current practice. The latter phase itself is subdivided as follows: (a) grade-placement of items in English textbooks, (b) the phases included and the relative emphasis on each, and (c) techniques and practices in evaluating and selecting textbooks in English. The alphabetically arranged bibliography and the summary are organized according to the two major classifications and their subdivisions. Any investigation that falls under more than one of the classifications is listed in each division where it is pertinent; but the identifying number for the investigation is prefixed only in the first listing of the investigation.¹

In Part Two of the bulletin, the original investigation of current practice in using English textbooks is reported in such a way as to show the practices typical of each of the four major regions of the United States and those typical of communities that vary in size from the rural to the urban. This investigation was carried on by the questionnaire method in order that a quick survey of practices in the entire country might be possible.

¹ In the bibliography of research studies that are herein included, a serial number is prefixed to the title of each investigation so as to provide a simple and economical mode of identification. Thus, the first item in the bibliography is Baker's study. Any reference to her investigation is indicated by a *one* in parentheses (1), and a page-reference to the same is indicated by the same symbol with the addition of a colon and page-numbers, as (1:45).

RESPONSES BY STATE

<i>South</i>	Using	Not using	<i>Middle West</i>	Using	Not using
Alabama	5	..	Illinois	9	7
Arkansas	..	5	Indiana	9	2
Florida	5	1	Iowa	16	4
Georgia	10	5	Kansas	7	2
Kentucky	4	..	Michigan	5	12
Louisiana	9	..	Minnesota	3	2
Mississippi	3	..	Missouri	3	1
Oklahoma	2	4	Nebraska	4	..
North Carolina	1	..	North Dakota	1	2
South Carolina	2	1	Ohio	4	..
Tennessee	6	2	South Dakota	3	3
Texas	7	..	Wisconsin	4	3
Virginia	10	4		—	—
West Virginia	1	..		68	38
	—	—	<i>West</i>		
	65	22	Arizona	4	..
<i>North Atlantic</i>			California	5	2
Connecticut	3	7	Colorado	11	4
Delaware	Idaho	2	..
Maryland	9	..	Montana	3	2
Maine	Nevada
Massachusetts	9	2	New Mexico	2	..
New Hampshire	4	..	Oregon	5	1
New Jersey	21	6	Utah	1	..
New York	7	2	Washington	2	2
Pennsylvania	12	6	Wyoming	9	3
Rhode Island	2	..		—	—
Vermont	1	..		44	14
	—	—			
	68	23			

	RESPONDENTS—IDENTIFIABLE				
	South	North Atlantic	Middle West	West	Total
<i>Using books</i>					
Supt.	1	3	13	6	23
Supervisor	30	26	18	6	80
Principal	13	20	17	13	63
Teacher	17	9	17	19	62
	—	—	—	—	—
Total	61	58	65	44	228
<i>Not using books</i>					
Supt.	1	2	4	..	7
Supervisor	6	9	12	7	34
Principal	8	12	7	2	29
Teacher	5	1	15	5	26
	—	—	—	—	—
Total	20	24	38	14	96

PART ONE

A SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIONS INVOLVING TEXTBOOKS IN LANGUAGE-COMPOSITION AND GRAMMAR AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

I. BIBLIOGRAPHY

In the bibliography that follows, an item is included in each classification where it is pertinent. Whenever any item is pertinent to more than one of the classifications, the complete bibliographical form is included only for its first appearance. References to this bibliography are indicated by parenthetical numbers in the text.

A. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Analysis of Contents

1. Baker, Elizabeth W. *The Development of Elementary Language Textbooks*. Contributions to Education, No. 45. Nashville, Tennessee: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1929. Pp. 80.
2. Besig, Emma M. S. "The History of Composition Teaching in American Schools before 1900." Syracuse, New York: Ph.D. thesis at Cornell University, 1935. (Abstract with 4 pages.)
3. Boyd, Holland L. *English Grammar in American Schools from 1850 to 1890*. Con-

tributions to Education, No. 163. Nashville, Tennessee: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1935. (Abstract with ii + 9 pages.)

4. Lyman, R. L. *English Grammar in American Schools before 1850*. Bulletin, 1921, No. 12. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922. Pp. 170.
5. Pooley, Robert C. *Grammar and Usage in Textbooks in English*. University of Wisconsin Bureau of Educational Research Bulletin, No. 14. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1933. Pp. 172.
6. Stanley, Leona J. "The Disappearance of Formal Grammar in the Elementary Schools of Alabama." Unpublished Master's thesis at George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1933. Pp. vi-83.
7. Stormzand, M. J., and O'Shea, M. V. *How Much English Grammar?* Baltimore: Warwick and York, 1924. Pp. 224.

B. CURRENT PRACTICE

Grade-placement: specifically on contents of English textbooks

8. Akey, Ethel G. "An Analysis of Elementary English Textbooks." Unpublished Master's thesis at Colorado State College of

Education, 1934. (Abstract with 8 pages.)

9. **Burnham, F. R.** "Textbook Grade-Placement of Fundamental Capitalization and Punctuation Skills." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Iowa, 1932. Pp. 61.
10. **Green, Thomas C.** "A Survey of the Language Skills and Their Grade Emphasis in Certain Language Textbooks." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Iowa, 1929. Pp. 71.
11. **Lien, Jacob A. O.** "The Grade Location and Drill Frequencies of Certain Adjective Modifiers in Selected Language Texts." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Iowa, 1931. Pp. 225.
12. **Macmillan, Junia Nave.** "An Analysis of the Literature Relating to the Teaching of English Grammar." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Southern California, 1931. Pp. v + 104.
13. **Van Brussel, Martha.** "The Grade Location and Frequency of Verb Usage in Certain Elementary Language Texts." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Iowa, 1930. Pp. 98.

Grade-placement: check against criteria for placement

14. **Cesander, Paul K.** "A Study of Pupil Usage As a Factor in the Grade Placement of Certain Items of Punctuation." Unpublished Doctor's thesis at the University of Iowa, 1931. Pp. 141.
15. **Friest, Thomas L.** "An Analysis of Pre-third Grade Language Instruction." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Iowa, 1933. Pp. 113.
16. **Hunt, Shay.** "A Measure of Learning Language in Intermediate Grades." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Oklahoma, 1932. (Abstract on file at the University of Tennessee.)

Phases emphasized: specifically on contents of English textbooks

- (8) **Akey, Ethel G.** *Op. cit.*
17. **Blamey,** "An Analysis of English Textbooks." Unpublished Master's thesis at the Colorado State College of Education at Greeley.
18. **Dawson, Mildred A.** "Language Textbooks for Grades Three and Four." Manuscript of a third-grade textbook in English. Final document for doctorate at New York University, 1936. Pp. 270.
19. **Dyer, Clara A.** "Pupil Activities in Ele-

mentary English Textbooks." *The Elementary English Review*, II (January, 1925). Pp. 5-10.

20. **Hamer, Anna M.** "The Study of the Overlap in Language Skills in Six Elementary Language Textbooks." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Iowa, 1929. Pp. 59.
21. **Irwin, Lena S.** "Capitalization and Punctuation in Elementary Language Textbooks." Unpublished Master's thesis at the Colorado State College of Education at Greeley. (Abstract of 8 pages.)
22. **Laun, Fillmore Carl.** "An Analysis of Fifth Grade Language Skills." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Iowa, 1934.
23. **Lawson, Douglas E.** "Content of Language Textbooks," *The Elementary English Review*, XII (March, May, 1935) pp. 57-60; 120-122; 144. (Articles based on his Master's thesis at the Colorado State College of Education, 1934.)
24. **Long, Dorothy Marcy.** "An Analytical Study of Certain Third-Grade Language Texts." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Pittsburgh, 1933. Pp. 49.
25. **Lyman, R. L.** "A Study of Twenty-Four Recent Seventh- and Eighth-Grade Language Texts," *The Elementary School Journal*, XXIV (February, 1924) pp. 440-52.
26. **Page, Minnie Regina.** "An Analysis of Textbooks for the Teaching of English Composition." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Pittsburgh, 1936. (Abstract on file at the University of Tennessee.)
27. **Rivlen, Harry N.** *Functional Grammar*. Teachers College Contribution to Education, No. 435. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1930. Pp. 93.
28. **Tanruther, Edgar M.** "An Inventory of Instructional Devices for Stimulating Written Language Production in the Elementary Grades." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Iowa, 1929. Pp. 126.
29. **Van Brussel, Anna.** "An Analysis of the Content of Six Language Texts for Fifth and Sixth Grades." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Iowa, 1929. Pp. 98.
- (13) **Van Brussel, Martha.** *Op. cit.*

Phases emphasized: check against criteria

30. **Dawson, Mildred A.** "Language Textbooks: A Study of Five Recent Seventh-

Grade Texts." *The Elementary English Review*, VI (February, March, 1929) pp. 43-46; 69-73.

31. **Dawson, Mildred A.** "Recent Sixth-Grade Language Textbooks," *The Elementary English Review*, XIII (March, 1936) pp. 85-90; "Recent Language Textbooks," *The Elementary English Review*, XIV (March, 1937) pp. 89-95.
 32. **Galleher, Lillian G.** "An Analytical Study of the Content of Language Books and Courses of Study for the Primary Grades." Unpublished Master's thesis at the Colorado State College of Education at Greeley, 1934. (Abstract of 6 pages.)
 33. **Gross, Grace.** "Objective Determination of Theme Topics." Unpublished Master's thesis at Colorado State College for Teachers at Greeley, 1933. Pp. viii + 84.
 34. **Hannah, Margaret Hood.** "Subjects Chosen by Sixth-Grade Children for Spontaneous Compositions." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Pittsburgh, 1928. Pp. ii + 43.
 35. **Hays, Louella.** "A Study of Certain Skills Found in Elementary English Textbooks." Unpublished Master's thesis at the Colorado State College of Education.
 36. **Holtman, Nell G.** "Pupil Usage in Written Composition As Related to Textbook Drill." Unpublished Master's thesis at the University of Iowa, 1932. Pp. 107.
 37. **Jakobs, Sybil.** "The Oral Expression Content of Seventh- and Eighth-Grade English Textbooks." Unpublished Master's thesis at Colorado State College of Education at Greeley, 1932. (Abstract of 2 pages.)
 38. **Johnson, Roy I.** *English Expression: A Study in Curriculum Building*. Bloomington, Illinois: The Public School Publishing Company, 1926. Pp. 106.
 39. **Miner, Floyd H.** "The Present Status of Language Teaching in the Elementary Schools as Revealed by Eighty-Eight Courses of Study." Unpublished Master's thesis at Indiana University, 1925. Pp. vii + 69.
- (12) **Macmillan, Junia Nave.** *Op. cit.*

C. SELECTION OF LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS *Evaluation*

40. **Andrews, David W.** "The Rating of English Textbooks for Fifth and Sixth Grades." Unpublished Master's thesis at Ohio State University, 1935. Pp. iv + 93.
41. **Caverly, Ernest.** "Fundamental Principles Underlying the Preparation of a Score Card for Textbooks in English," *The English*

Journal, XV (April, 1926) pp. 267-76.

42. **Keirnes, Geneva E.** "Teachers' Estimates of Elementary English Textbooks." Unpublished Master's thesis at the Colorado State College of Education, 1935. (Abstract of 5 pages.)
43. **Maxwell, C. R.** "The Use of Score Cards in Evaluating Textbooks," *Thirtieth Yearbook, Part II*, The National Society for the Study of Education. Bloomington, Illinois: The Public School Publishing Company, 1931. (Pages 143-63 include a score card designed specifically for the evaluation of language textbooks.)
44. **Smith, Dora V.** "Evaluation of Composition Textbooks: Report of the National Council Committee," *English Journal* (High School Edition), XXI (April, 1932) pp. 280-94.
45. **Smith, Dora V.** "Report of the Committee on the Evolution of Textbooks in Composition," *The Elementary English Review*, X (June, 1933), pp. 151-55; 160.

II. SUMMARY OF STUDIES INVOLVING TEXTBOOKS IN ENGLISH

A. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS SHOWN BY AN ANALYSIS OF TEXTBOOKS

Treatment of Materials: Methods of Presentation

Through the analysis of textbooks, various investigators have traced the historical development of the teaching of English from pre-Revolutionary times to the beginning of the present decade. Lyman (4)² in his monograph entitled *English Grammar in American Schools before 1850* made a thorough and comprehensive analysis of textbooks in grammar published from the time of their introduction into America in 1750 until the middle of the nineteenth century. He found that the methods of teaching in the period between 1750 and 1823 were strictly modeled after the Latin: instruction started with the word and stressed the recognition of parts of speech. Pupils were trained in the parrot-like repetition of rules which they made little attempt to

² Parenthetical numbers refer to titles in the bibliography, pages 3-5.

apply. For practice, the pupils were assigned exercises in syntax, etymology, parsing, and the correction of false syntax. After 1823, certain innovations in method appeared. These reflected an interest in the learner as was shown by the efforts of the textbooks' authors to help pupils understand through clear-cut visual and oral instruction and to make the teaching functional by providing beginnings in constructive work.

The historical development of grammar in American schools was traced still further by Boyd (3) who analyzed a variety of original source materials, including English textbooks, in his effort to determine the status of grammar-teaching from 1850 to 1890. Boyd particularized the facts of such teaching at the elementary level. Pertinent facts are quoted from the abstract of his thesis.

Owing to the fact that grammar was considered a "higher study," it was not generally taught in the elementary school during the first decades of the nineteenth century. As the years passed, however, it was more and more often taught in the lower grades until by 1850, in such public school systems as existed, it was fast coming to be considered an elementary study. This was particularly true in city systems. Soon after 1850 and during the remainder of the period under discussion, grammar was generally taught in elementary schools throughout the country. (Page 4.)

Methods of teaching grammar before 1850 were almost wholly derived from the methods used in teaching Latin grammar. . . . There was a slight break away from these traditional methods on the part of a few teachers and authors before 1850. The influence of the Pestalozzian doctrines was being felt, and certain texts were written which were definitely under that influence. . . . The sentence was beginning to be considered by some as the proper unit for studying the language. . . . Pupil activity was also making its appearance in the demand that pupils write sentences of their own composition.

Early in the period 1850-1890 grammar became a subject of major importance in the elementary schools and was widely taught at that level. The work sometimes began as early as the second grade and continued with increasing emphasis and technicality from grade to grade. The greatest emphasis was laid on the study during the years immediately preceding the secondary school.

Owing to the influence of Pestalozzi, much of

the work in grammar during the first five or six years of the elementary school was oral. During the seventies and eighties, courses designated as "language" were introduced into the elementary school and tended to push formal grammar to the years just preceding the secondary school and into the secondary school itself. (Pages 4-6.)

Around the middle of the century, a method which took the sentence as the unit of study became prominent. The analysis of sentences, however, did not replace the Latin methods but was only added to them, and parsing and analysis became the usual practice. Along with analysis of sentences came diagramming. . . . Various systems of diagramming sentences, parsing the words, and correcting violations of the various rules of syntax continued to be the most dominant methods of teaching grammar during the last half of the century, regardless of the educational level. . . . The Latin methods were thus retained during the entire period of this study. To these had been added the analysis and diagramming of sentences, and, during the last quarter of the century, the practice of writing original sentences and exercises.

Language courses became prominent in the most progressive systems about 1875. These courses were usually for children of the first five or six grades. The work in these grades was sometimes oral, and when a textbook was adopted, usually about fifth grade, written composition and an increasing amount of oral composition were taught. . . .

At the end of the period 1850-90, formal grammar was still generally taught in elementary schools, though fewer hours per year were given to its study. . . . The methods used in teaching the subject combined the Latin methods of the first half of the century with analysis and diagramming of sentences and, to a limited extent, the writing of original sentences and compositions. (Page 9.)

Besig (2) made a study complementary to those of Lyman and Boyd when she traced the history of composition teaching in American schools before 1900. Her analysis of textbooks and other source materials revealed that the dominant aim in teaching composition between 1750 and 1900 was not so much to develop the art of written communication as to afford mental discipline. About 1880, there became apparent some tendency to see composition as a form of communication, the major goal of which was accuracy. "Content was sacrificed to the mechanics of writing, and exercises in the correction of false syntax became popular." (Page 3 of

abstract of thesis.) More specifically, Besig reports:

About 1830, when Pestalozzian ideas were introduced into this country, composition found its way into the elementary school. Textbooks designed particularly for beginners appeared. Practice was now recognized as a preliminary to the study of principles. Reforms also followed in methods. Although difficult subjects still found a place, efforts were made to arouse the interest of pupils. Preliminary discussions modeled upon the Pestalozzian object lessons assisted the student in the preparation of his composition. Gradually the idea grew that children must have practice if they are to learn to write, and by the end of the nineteenth century it was firmly established.

Examination of textbooks in use before 1900 reveals the association of composition with other phases of English instruction. Until about 1850, composition was a hand-maiden of grammar, serving as a means of inculcating rules of grammar. . . . Beginning about 1850, composition was taught in connection with rhetoric. Brief exercises providing practice in the rhetorical principles studied gave way to full length compositions. Finally, in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, composition and literature were closely associated.

(Composition had a hard struggle in finding its place in the curriculum.) With the definite establishment of composition during the last decade of the nineteenth century, educators, instead of spending their energies vindicating composition teaching, could begin experimenting. A new era in the history of composition teaching had commenced. (Page 4.)

In a comprehensive but somewhat superficial study, Baker (1) traced the development of elementary English textbooks from 1843 to 1927. She noted the occurrence by decades of certain kinds of exercises and determined that there had been a rather steady increase in the variety of exercises along with a growing adaptation to the nature and needs of children—particularly in respect to a change from logical to psychological order in the arrangement of materials.

Stanley (6), after analyzing Alabama's state-adopted English textbooks for 1910, 1924, and 1930, came to the rather optimistic conclusion that, while sentence structure and correct speaking and writing had been emphasized in 1910, "the series

of textbooks for 1930 emphasize the language activities of life by basing practically all work on the experiences of children, making conversation and talks the principal devices. Grammar sections are designed to serve as guides and tools for the child with which he may learn how to express ideas and to understand the ideas of others. In other words, grammar serves as a means of communication." (Page 37.) While Stanley's study was extremely limited in its scope, its conclusions that recent books have stressed children's experiences and the functional aspects of English teaching seem warranted in the light of the findings of the numerous investigations of current practice to be reviewed in a subsequent section of this summary.

Stormzand and O'Shea (7) made a systematic study of ten textbooks published between 1875 and 1924. In Chapter XI of their *How Much English Grammar?*, they state that "there is no consistent principle underlying the making of grammar textbooks or the planning of grammar courses." (Page 196.) They found extreme variation among textbooks in the treatment of the same topic and in the relative emphasis given to the specific phases of a general topic. Apparently the trends reported by Lyman (4) continued, since Stormzand and O'Shea note "the transition from parsing, classification, analysis, and drill on rules and definitions to the type of exercise that compels expression, or the functional application of grammatical techniques" and "the emphasis put on the overcoming of common errors in the last five years." (Page 203.)

These six studies have made apparent certain definite trends in the historical development of English textbooks. There has been a shift of emphasis away from words (etymology, syntax, parsing, paradigms) to sentences and continuous discourse, from formal and memoriter methods to functional treatment, from a logical presentation of all-important

grammatical facts and theoretical rules to the development of situations that call for communication, from subject matter to child interests and needs, and from a comparatively superficial treatment of numerous aspects of grammar to an intensive treatment of a relatively few items of proven social utility. In selecting items to be stressed and in determining relative emphasis upon them, authors of English textbooks have varied widely.

The Content of Textbooks in English

Even in grammars of a century ago, Lyman (4) found the beginnings of constructive work. These beginnings have grown through the years as is shown by the findings of the investigators of the historical development of textbooks in English. According to Baker (1), the proportion of exercises devoted to composition has steadily increased since 1840, this increase being accompanied by a corresponding decrease in the amount of grammar; in 1840, the oral aspects of composition began to receive considerable attention (ten per cent of the exercises in composition) and have been increasingly emphasized until the point of equal stress was reached about a decade ago. Baker also noted that, since 1900, there has been a slow but steady growth in the number of exercises that prepare children to meet social situations. Boyd (3) noted a similar displacement of grammar by composition and likewise the gradually increasing amount of attention accorded oral composition since 1875. According to Besig (2), Pestalozzian theories were responsible for the introduction of composition about 1830, the oral phases consisting of discussions similar to Pestalozzian object lessons which were used to help the pupils prepare for their written compositions. Before 1850, composition was associated with grammar; for the next three decades, rhetoric and composition were taught to-

gether; and beginning about 1880, the pupils' written and oral expression were largely the outgrowth of the study of literature. Like Baker, Stormzand and O'Shea (7) noted a "trend toward functional language work" in the early decades of the twentieth century. (Page 203.) Stanley (6), upon analyzing three series of books dating from 1910 to 1930, found that "activity work" was fast taking the place of the formerly stressed development of rules and definitions.

Pooley (5) was interested in revealing the discrepancies between the usage that is recommended in English textbooks and the regularly observed customs of language, and in tracing the origin and development of the traditional rules and standards concerning usage so that he might show their variance with the facts of past and present usage. Of the sixteen books that he analyzed, only five were elementary. In relation to our problem of historical development, he concluded that authors of English textbooks which were published between 1900 and 1930 were preoccupied with traditional standards which had been copied from one book to another for many decades, the standards frequently having, in their inception, been misrepresentations of the current English usage, "urging distinctions not found in the language itself, or prohibiting uses fully established on the grounds of logic, analogy, etymology, and other eighteenth-century criteria." (Page 149.)

A review of the historical development of the content of textbooks in English reveals that for more than a century, authors have increasingly attempted to include materials of a functional type. Exercises in formal grammar have been more and more minimized in favor of composition and social situations. However, in matters of usage, authors have tended to be imitative and have continued to stress niceties and artificial discriminations that were not warranted in the first instance.

(To be continued)

Stimuli for Oral Language

An Evaluation of Certain Materials *

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THE FACT THAT we speak much more than we write is obvious to anyone who resorts to a short period of reflection upon his daily language activities. Similar reflection will indicate also that his training in English consisted largely in training to write. A perusal of less recent language texts and courses of study will bear out this latter conclusion.

Within the last decade a number of workers in the field of language have pointed out the necessity for a revision of the relative curricular emphasis on oral and written language. Starbird¹ has shown that only one out of twenty-nine demands on language ability is of the written type. Smith² has indicated that teachers spend too much time on the mechanical and technical aspects of language. Greater need for emphasis on oral language has been pointed out by Lyman.³

In the light of these findings, modern curricular emphasis is being adjusted to provide more adequate oral language instruction. With this adjustment have come certain problems in materials and methods. One of these problems is the discovery of materials and procedures useful for stimulating oral composition. This study was made for the purpose of

experimentally evaluating certain materials as stimuli for oral language.

Interviews with teachers, supervisors, and directors of training schools yielded a list of suggestions of possible stimuli for oral composition. This list proved to be too extensive. It also contained many suggestions which were not applicable to the ordinary schoolroom situation. On the basis of criteria such as scope, creation of a desire, effect of cultural limitations, grade level, and suitability to the sexes, eight stimuli were selected as most worthwhile. These stimuli were each presented to groups of children who, according to their teacher's judgment, were of superior, average, and inferior oral language ability. An objective evaluation of each stimulus was made on the basis of the length, interest, and continuity of the responses made by the pupils at each of these three levels of ability. On the basis of this preliminary tryout, three things were chosen to be used for stimulating oral composition. They were a picture, an incomplete story, and an object.

These three stimuli were presented to groups of children in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades of the University Elementary School at the University of Iowa, and the pupils' responses were recorded by the Iowa oral language recording equipment. The children were told that the investigator was making a collection of children's stories and that he would like to have each child tell the best story he could about each of the stimuli. Each child made at least one response; many made two or three. The children were not

* Prepared under the direction of Dr. Harry A. Greene, at the University of Iowa.

¹ Starbird, M. et al., "Out of School Uses of English," *English Journal* (High School Edition) XXII (June, 1933), pp. 466-471.

² Smith, Dora V., *Instruction in English*. Report of the Survey of Secondary Schools, 1932, No. 17. Government Printing Office.

³ Lyman, R. L., *Summary of Investigations in Grammar, Language, and Composition*. Supplementary Educational Monographs, No. 36, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 1929.

"microphone conscious," due to the fact that they had seen the microphones before, and had had their responses recorded for other studies in previous years.

TABLE I

The number of samples, average number of words, average number of concepts and average Thorndike Scale rating for each stimulus for each grade.

	No. Samples	Av. No. Words	Av. No. Concepts	Rating Av. Scale
<i>Grade 4</i>				
Picture	16	195.75	31.13	38.31
Story	15	166.4	29.47	37.7
Object	20	224.	37.3	37.75
<i>Grade 5</i>				
Picture	16	194.94	32.88	40.81
Story	14	172.	28.79	40.57
Object	12	257.	38.33	39.5
<i>Grade 6</i>				
Picture	13	181.92	32.54	46.38
Story	14	165.79	24.5	46.21
Object	15	146.47	24.4	47.87

The records of the 135 responses were transcribed and proofread. Fifty-one were from the fourth grade, forty-two from the fifth grade, and forty-two from the sixth grade. No effort was made to limit the number of compositions. All that were given were recorded and transcribed. The compositions varied in length from thirty-eight to one thousand fourteen words.

An exact copy of each response was used for the analysis. Although the compositions contained many incomplete sentences, sentence fragments, and repetitions of words and phrases, they were not smoothed because the exact oral response was desired for analysis.

The average number of running words and the average number of concepts for each stimulus for each grade are given in Table I. (A concept was defined as a group of words which conveyed a single idea.) Table I shows that when a picture

was used as a stimulus in the fourth grade, sixteen responses were obtained. The average number of words in these sixteen compositions was 195.75 and the average number of concepts was 31.13. When the story was used as a stimulus in the fourth grade fifteen responses were obtained averaging 166.4 words in length and containing an average of 29.47 concepts. This table gives the corresponding information for the use of the object as a stimulus in grade four and for the use of each stimulus in grades five and six.

No satisfactory scale of oral composition merit being available, the compositions were rated by the investigator on the Thorndike Extension of the Hillegas Scale.⁴ Each composition was rated separately. Then the whole group was arranged in order on a long table, the entire group gone over, and the value assigned compared with those above and below it. Some changes were made during the latter process. The average ratings as obtained in this manner are shown in Table I. The average quality rating given to responses stimulated by a picture in grade four was 38.31. The averages for the story and object responses in the same grade were 37.7 and 37.75 respectively. The table also shows the average rating for each stimulus response in grades five and six.

As might have been expected, the Thorndike Scale was found to be unsatisfactory for rating oral compositions for a number of reasons. Too small a difference in quality between the poorest and the best of these compositions was revealed through the use of the Thorndike Scale. Oral compositions contain sentence fragments and repetitions which add emphasis and aid the audience in obtaining the speaker's meaning, but which are not considered effective and polished when

⁴ Thorndike, E. L., *The Thorndike Extension of the Hillegas Scale*. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1915.

they appear in written form. Children, like adults, use words and expressions in speaking which they do not use in writing. For these reasons the standards for evaluating oral composition differ from the standards used for evaluating written composition. The inadequacy of written scales for judging oral productions was also pointed out by Gregerson⁵ in his investigation of the relative oral and written language abilities of certain school children. Thus it was necessary to find some other method of rating the compositions. The only practical way seemed to be to build a scale from the compositions themselves. A revision of the Thurstone⁶ technique was used in deriving this scale.

By this means each composition received a scale rating which indicated its value in relation to every other composition. The average scale difference between pairs of compositions was determined by subtracting the value of the poorest from the value of the best and dividing by the number of compositions. This proved to be .53 standard deviation. The average scale value for compositions resulting from each stimulus was found and the average number of scale differences between stimuli was obtained. These differences are shown in Table II. The average scale value of responses to the story was 13.23 standard deviation units and the average for responses to the picture was 11.27 units. When the difference between these two averages is divided by .53, the average standard deviation unit difference between all the samples, it was found that there were 3.7 of these unit differences between the averages for the story and picture as stimuli. The numbers of these units between the averages for

the picture and object and story and object were found to be 12 and 8.3 respectively. None of these differences proved to be statistically significant. The object proved to be the best stimulus, the story second best, and the picture the poorest.

TABLE II

The number of average scale differences between averages as a result of picture and story, picture and object, and story and object.

13.23 — 11.27	Average scale differences
————— = 3.7	between story and
.53	picture
17.62 — 11.27	Average scale differences
————— = 12	between object and
.53	picture
17.62 — 13.23	Average scale differences
————— = 8.3	between object and
.53	story

Correlations between the quality of compositions from different stimuli for the same individual were not of any value because of the limited number of cases. For this reason the following method was used. The compositions resulting from each stimulus were divided into two groups—those above the average for that stimulus and those below the average. It was found that the individuals who produced the best responses to one stimulus likewise produced above average responses to the other stimuli. Also, those who produced the lowest responses to one stimulus produced below average responses to the other stimuli. From this it seems logical to reason that the quality of the response depends more upon the pupil than upon the stimulus used to obtain the response.

Although there proved to be no statistically significant difference in favor of any one of the three types of stimuli used, the following conclusions seem worth pointing out.

The number of words in an oral composition is no indication of its

⁵ Gregerson, A. J., *The Relative Oral and Written Language Abilities of Certain School Children*, Master's Thesis, University of Iowa, 1931.

⁶ Thurstone, L. L., "An Experimental Study of Nationality Preferences," *Journal of General Psychology* 1 (July, 1928), pp. 405-423.

quality. Many of those containing from fifty to seventy-five words far surpassed those containing six hundred to a thousand words.

The number of distinct concepts is not in proportion to the number of words. Many lengthy compositions contain only the repetition of a few concepts.

A written composition scale is unsatisfactory for rating oral compositions of this type. The difference in quality between the poorest and the best composition is not great enough to make accurate placement possible. Also, written scales are based on written material and hence are unsuited for judging oral compositions.

The sentence structure and usage of oral compositions are inferior to those of written compositions.

Many errors in oral composition are not caught by the listener. Compositions which were considered good as they were listened to were found to be much lower in quality after they were transcribed. Some of the constructions which are considered unpolished when they appear in written form, apparently add to the effectiveness of oral productions. In other words, our standards of evaluation change. We use one set of standards for evaluating oral composition and another set for evaluating written composition.

In general, children who respond well to one stimulus also respond well to another, and those who respond poorly to one stimulus also respond poorly to another.

There is a need for different kinds of devices for evaluating oral composition. Written scales are not suited for evaluating oral composition because the English construction and usage of

oral and written composition differ, and thus the standards of evaluation must differ. Also sentence fragments, incomplete statements, and repetitions which add emphasis and meaning to oral composition are judged unpolished when used in written composition.

It appears to be necessary both to hear and see an oral composition in order to evaluate it.

The results of the investigation seem to apply to classroom teaching procedures in a number of ways.

Because life outside of school demands the use of much more oral than written language, the teaching emphasis should continue to be on oral language in the form of stories, reports, summaries, and recitations.

Every lesson is a language lesson. Therefore instead of setting up artificial situations for developing oral language ability, make use of the situations as they arise in each subject. The child who has visited an orange grove will be much more interested in telling the class of this visit than in telling a story about some picture or object in which he has little interest. Consequently the child will do a better job of telling and the audience will be more appreciative and gain knowledge at the same time.

Until a more objective means of judging oral composition is devised, each teacher and her group of pupils should set up their own standards. They should be constructive suggestions in the children's own words rather than in the more or less meaningless phrases of the text. These oral standards must differ from written standards by allowing for voice, gesture, and repetition for emphasis.

A New Approach to Teaching the Language Arts

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IN MANY CASES we have followed through several school years the development of boys and girls who enter the first grade with embryonic speech, language usage, and conversation habits that closely approach perfection. In all too many instances the agency which would help build upon this happy condition is rewarded for its efforts by very apparent, progressive, and rapid backsliding in the language habits of such youngsters. Even the "for whom's" that may have been habitual have changed to "who for's," the "have gone's" to "have went's." The clear, dynamic voices full of expression and ringing with sincerity have changed to cautious, formal, hesitating, unsure voices expressing only what they think is expected of them. A little later we see a similar lack of growth and oftentimes even deterioration in the desirable reading habits which were established in the early grades.

For many children the school program fails to develop the natural ability and desire of boys and girls to communicate their experiences, express their feelings, and to interpret the experiences and feelings of others. Often during the years he remains in school the child is permitted to lose the tools and abilities for expression and interpretation with which he began his school experience. Often our most sincere attempts to teach the arts of language result in very apparent failure. It is evident, also, that many times good language habits are developed in the informal environment of the pre-

school or possibly the early school years only to be completely overridden by the habits developed in the language environments of the later school years.

We must not interpret this evidence to mean that all children fail to improve their habits of communication when they enter school. Some schools do offer a language environment which is decidedly better than that of the home for many children and in these children we are accustomed to see speech and general language improvement shortly after entrance to school. Neither is the point that the schools may have failed to recognize the need for a language program in the early grades, for many schools in their attempts to "teach language" by language books, "English" lessons, etc., have for a long while used far too much time for such classes that are definitely planned to increase language ability.

There is a problem arising from such observations, however, which has become the point of this and other discussions. Is the language environment outside the language class a more effective agency in developing the child's language habits?

This matter becomes more and more a problem as the pupil continues through the well-organized and well-taught language arts courses of the elementary and high school grades and college. Even after this somewhat selective process of instruction he "comes out" very often unable to organize, communicate, or otherwise express the products of his thinking in an effective and desirable manner.

Naturally many individuals complete their school years with a record that would indicate that they have experienced a continuous development of language ability. Others with equal individual potentialities and the same school experiences have failed to develop in the arts of language. There is apparently some educational force which in the case of language arts exerts a stronger force than our planned language arts courses.

Without attempting the task of giving a psychological explanation we shall proceed to describe adjustments in an elementary school program through which it is possible to take advantage of this evidence.

An analysis of the language experiences of the boys and girls in grades four through eight in several ordinary elementary schools showed clearly that the pupils found and felt much more frequent and urgent need for language in all its forms in first, the social studies, and second, the science classes. Inasmuch as there seemed to be no evidence of satisfactory pupil growth in language where these skills were developed in relative isolation with the hope that they will be used when needed, it was suggested that we attempt to teach these skills as means to the more social aims of our instructional program. We might anticipate the out-of-school as well as the in-school language needs of the boys and girls by making the classes in social studies as nearly as possible approximate the natural learning situations and experiences of boys and girls. We might assume through these classes which are so planned as to give practice in successfully meeting real problems the responsibility for developing the language abilities which are needed in these same situations. Thereby we should be teaching language through situations in which the need for language most frequently occurs.

In keeping with these conclusions, ex-

perimental reorganization of the program in modified platoon and departmentalized schools was begun. Above the third grade the pupil's growth in language arts became the direct responsibility of the teacher of the social studies. In other words the school's contribution to pupil growth in the language arts—thinking, reading, speaking, or writing became a responsibility of the social studies teacher. He assumed the job of teaching all the study skills, and all the oral and written expression. This was in no sense of the word an attempt to make the language arts incidental to social studies. Rather the attempt was to put the language arts in a natural learning situation. The curriculum planning committees for language arts and social studies placed in the hands of each teacher of social studies a check list of the general grade expectancies in the language arts (see Table I), and each teacher was made to feel as definitely as any special teacher of language arts her responsibilities for pupil growth in this field.

Programs were altered to give these teachers extra instructional time in keeping with these added responsibilities. Some teachers reported at the time of this re-programming that they did not need an extension of the instructional period, that they had been taking these responsibilities all the time under the old schedules. They were, however, in every case given extra instructional time which they readily use to advantage.

Not only were programs altered, teachers were exchanged. It is well to be aware of the fact that a "subject matter specialist" will not do under the circumstances of this newer approach to teaching of language arts. The good teacher who knows how to teach children anything in which they can become the least bit interested was the type selected for these new responsibilities.

It should be noted here that, contrary

to the warnings of the social studies specialists, the instructional and survey testing programs indicate conclusively that the subject matter which can be objectively measured by standardized tests,

gram may be attributed much of this pupil growth in the language arts. For instance the assumption by the social studies teacher of the language arts jobs left additional time for a well-planned

TABLE I
READING ABILITIES TO BE DEVELOPED BY PUPILS AND THE RELATIVE DEGREE
OF TEACHING EMPHASIS AT THE VARIOUS GRADE LEVELS¹

Key:

1. Pupils' attention merely called to the objective.
2. Help given those pupils who fail to recognize the objective or who fail to make progress toward the objective.
3. Considerable teaching and analysis of individual difficulties an important objective of the grade.
4. A major objective of the grade requiring as much teaching as is necessary for desired attainment.

The double line denotes the grade level at which the teaching of the language arts becomes the job of the social studies teacher.

	Teaching Emphasis by Grades							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
<i>The ability to organize material</i>								
To select the main thought in a paragraph or story.	1	1	2	3	4	4	3	3
To select supporting details after determining the main thought of a paragraph.			1	2	3	3	4	4
To outline.			1	1	2	3	4	4
To make oral or written summaries.	1	2	3	4	4	4	4	4
<i>The ability to comprehend</i>								
To make meaning from new words from the meaning of the sentence.				3	2	2	2	2
<i>The ability to retain important facts</i>								
To use organization as aid to retention.	1	2	3	4	4	4	4	4
<i>The ability to locate data</i>								
<i>The ability and habit of recognizing and using the most desirable methods of reading</i>								
<i>The ability to interpret and evaluate reading material</i>								
<i>The ability and desire to read well orally</i>								

regardless of its relative importance, is learned and retained under this new program as well as ever. On the other hand and regardless of the advice and in spite of the threats of the teachers who were only language arts specialists, the pupils have shown growth in all language arts.

To certain other changes in the pro-

"literature" program. To direct this phase of the curriculum, teachers were chosen who knew and appreciated the difference between "recreatory" and "work or informational" purposes in reading. A plain definition of the responsibility of these teachers for a purely recreatory literature program had, undoubtedly, much to do with increased demand by the pupils for good recreatory reading materials both in and out of school.

¹ Taken from Curriculum Monograph No. 3, Omaha Public Schools, 1936, and greatly abbreviated for illustration. This list was placed in the hands of every teacher of social studies.

The First Children's Spring Book Festival*

MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

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THE SUCCESS OF THE first Children's Spring Book Festival, sponsored by the *New York Herald Tribune* in the interests of children's reading, was so sudden and so complete that I admit at once that it took me by surprise. I had expected that it would be successful, because it met a need that was real, and that many people the country over knew to be real, but I was prepared to find that this success would be gradual, extending over a series of such celebrations. I was most happily taken by surprise, as I have said, when the Spring Book Festival in the single season, its plans announced only after the year was well under way and other events in full swing, should have been so enthusiastically celebrated the country over by so many different types of organizations.

As the editor of the department "Books for Young People" in the *New York Herald Tribune's Books*, I was in a position to see how immediate this response was to the call to change a condition that had become little short of intolerable to those who had the interests of reading children at heart and wished them to have at their disposal good books the year around, as their elders have. This condition, briefly stated, had been coming on for some years. By far the greater number of children's books published—far too great a proportion of them—came out all at once in the brief interval between the opening of the fall season—and of the schools—and the coming of Christ-

mas. At that time we are likely to have far more new publications of this kind than we know what to do with. There are so many new books for children, young or older, that it is impossible for all those that deserve attention in print to be reviewed—even in a periodical that like *Books of the New York Herald Tribune* devotes a page every week to reviews of recent children's books in time for Christmas. There are so many then that they crowd each other off the book counters and out of the show windows. In this crowd of bright covers, the bewildered shopper often loses sight of the book she wanted most to find. And then, the holidays once over, the tendency of publishing for children has been to slow up sharply or to stop short. Congestion for three months and anaemia for the rest of the year; that was how the state of things was tending. One would think that the only use for a child's book was to give it to somebody at Christmas. Bookshops sometimes, especially in smaller places, covered up their "juveniles" and tucked them under the stairs until next fall. They said, and no doubt there was truth in what they said, that parents would buy only at Christmas. Some parents, however, replied that this was the only time when there were new books, bright and inviting, ready for them to buy. So a sort of vicious circle had formed, and shut out the ones most concerned—children who really read, not just before or after the holidays, but the year round, and in the long sunny days of summer vacation as freely at least as in the

* Read before a meeting of the Association of Arts in Childhood, 1936.

crowded season of school activities.

The first important effort to break this circle was made by the *New York Herald Tribune*, and it had such general approbation that it was clear how many must have been wishing for someone to bring such a change about. The *New York Herald Tribune*, in order to encourage publishers to bring out books in the spring as well as in the fall, announced that it would award two prizes of five hundred dollars each, one for the best book for younger children, the other for the best book for older children, *published in the spring of 1936*. It also announced that this would be an annual event, and that in connection with it the *New York Herald Tribune* would issue in May a special "Children's Spring Book Festival" number, corresponding to the famous "Children's Book Week" number it issues every year in November, in which these prize awards would be announced and illustrated reviews of important spring books for children would appear. In connection with this, it would, in co-operation with more than a hundred bookstores from coast to coast, celebrate the week of May 8, 1936, as a "Children's Spring Book Festival" in which the uses and delights of books in summer would be featured in every possible way, by all organizations willing to work with them to this end.

The response was delightful; there could be no other word for it. Publishers gladly responded: some of them actually changed the publication dates of that very year's books, advancing to the spring some that would have been held till fall, while others promised that next year spring lists would be adjusted to balance better with those of the fall. People asked in great numbers how they could help: it seemed as if everyone who loved children and books—and a great many people love both—must be interested in doing something to make it easier and

pleasanter for children to read in summer, and to use books for the many purposes the summer provides—nature-study, camping, travel, handcrafts of the country, hobbies, fireside story-telling, music, and who can say how many more? We had so many such calls that we hastily assembled some of the reports of what people were going to do the country over, and compiled a mimeographed list of suggestions, running to three large pages of small type, of entertainments, assembly programs, club meetings, library shows, book-store exhibits, school society celebrations, and the like, by which the possibilities of books in the spring and summer were to be made plain. We had so many calls for this list that we had to ask people not to call for more than a few copies at a time, for so many wanted them. The famous artist, Ludwig Bemelmans, made us a brilliant poster in colors. The prize awards aroused keen interest, which was quickened when it became known that such eminent men and women as Stephen Vincent Benét, Mrs. Dwight Morrow, Mary Gould Davis, and Hughes Mearns, each representing some special field of interest in children's reading, were to serve as judges with the editor of the page of "Books for Young People" as chairman. The meetings of the judges were fascinating; each one gave of his best and without stint. The prizes went, for the book for young children, to one of the most distinguished productions of years, *The Seven Simeons*, whose text, decorations, and make-up to the last detail was all the work of one man, Boris Artzybasheff, and the book for older children to a most unusual thriller, *The Smuggler's Sloop*, by Robb White, adventures of a brother and sister cast away in the Caribbees. When the actual week began, after a succession of preliminary entertainments in New York, conducted by associations in sympathy with the undertaking (I have time only to

speak of the fine reception held by the Teachers of English, in connection with the Spring Book Festival, so that their members might meet prominent authors of children's literature, and the forums conducted by the association for Arts in Childhood at the *Herald-Tribune* auditorium and in Westchester, N.Y.) I set out on a whirlwind tour of the Middle West, speaking at the various celebrations.

The letter contests held in connection with these were especially interesting. In city after city children accepted our offer, made through the local bookseller, of prize-books for the best letters on "My Favorite Book and Why I Like It." It was my happy task to award these prizes, and often to have the pleasure of talking with the winners about the books they loved. Alexander the Magician went along on these celebrations and did tricks out of his book on that subject; Inez Horgan introduced Nicodemus and Petunia; not to make too long a story, author after author, artist after artist, talked and drew pictures for the children. Then, the week over, photographs began to come in from places I had not visited, showing library decorations and show windows and party arrangements. I remember one, for instance, showing a Maypole with ribbons leading, not to dancing children, but to favorite children's books gayly tied with tissue paper, and another in which a library in the South had moved its exhibit of summer reading for young people out on the lawn and showed it under brightly striped shade-umbrellas.

One of the most important announcements of the enterprise was of course that all this would be an annual event. The object of the prizes being to encourage publishers to transfer some of their chil-

dren's books from the overcrowded fall lists to those of the spring, it is gratifying to see, in the advance news of next spring's projected publications, how how many of these transfers have already been made, and to forecast how many will be, as support for spring publications becomes soundly secured.

Celebration of the Children's Spring Book Festival this year will be wider than ever, so I am assured by reports coming in. The elementary schools of America could make the most delightful contribution of all to this outburst of spring. Characters in children's books, figures in their mythology, people in their favorite rhymes and jingles, are to children no mere pen and ink; they are thrillingly alive. Putting them on the platform, making little plays about them, arranging impromptu dialogues and living pictures, is the easiest thing in the world. Guessing games and contests involving their books and the people in them are more fun than work. Happy, informal talks by teacher or librarian about the fun of reading in the summer, and the comparing of such experiences by the children, are no trouble at all to arrange. Exhibits of hobbies, with the books in which they are treated; of pets with books about the care of pets; of pressed ferns or flowers, of mosses and bark, or of any of the treasures of wood and steam, with the many lovely nature-books by which these may be identified, are a form of class activity always welcome. In short, there is no end to the uses of books as tools of joy, in the days when school is out—and the children that use them thus will come back to school far more ready to take up their lessons in the spirit of joyous co-operation with their school-books.

Teaching Conversation Through the Conference

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ENGLISH IN ACTION" is the chief aim and motto of the progressive English classroom. The utilitarian motive of usage—clarity and decency of written and oral expression—now occupies the attention of the English teacher who is alert to curricular needs. Utility in life situations is the prime criterion for materials of instruction in English. In short, language for language's sake is increasingly giving way to the conception that language presents many useful tools that will aid both children and adults in expressing their thoughts with greater clarity and force.

Because the spotlight of critical evaluation has been turned on the traditional English curriculum, the "minimum essentials" of grammar, literature, and composition are being scrutinized seriously and in many respects are found wanting. Where once the task of the English teacher was the presentation of a logical survey of the structure of the English language with emphasis on dissection, analysis, and the rote memorization of the rules of grammar, functional approaches to problems of sentence sense, punctuation sense, verb and pronoun usage are now made in terms of broad social utility. Composition as the vital expression of one's own best thinking has supplanted composition as copy exercises in imitation of the masters of style. In the progressive school of today the new English curriculum is rightly included with the humanities.

These changing emphases in content,

however, do not constitute the total problem which the English teacher faces. Accompanying these subject matter changes are the needs for classroom techniques which better accomplish the functional approach to language. To accept the newer instructional materials and present them in the traditional manner would be futile. The use of such materials of instruction demands that the English teacher present these functional materials functionally. He must see beyond the customary "question and answer" method to more vital procedures whereby children learn to express themselves in more natural, normal situations involving the uses of language.

Conversation is one such normal language situation that plays a significant part in everyone's life. One may never be called upon to deliver an oration or enter a formal debate, but every day one has need to give directions, explanations, information and to convey ideas to one's family, neighbors, and friends. Certainly, then, to learn to be interesting and effective in such situations is a practical English experience. Where better could the art of conversation be fostered than in the English classroom?

Such proficiency in conversation demands a teaching procedure less formidable than the traditional formal recitation period. It implies an opportunity to talk together in informal groups about interesting subjects. It demands standards by which one is able to evaluate growth in ability to enter satisfactorily into the give-

and-take of the conversation of a social group. Herein lies the fundamental value of the small group conference.

The small group conference is a teaching procedure in which the class is divided into groups small enough to insure a stimulating discussion of problems or the exchange of ideas concerning a common interest. The initiation of this procedure, of course, entails definite leadership in organization and administration on the part of the teacher. To attempt to plunge a group of children into the procedure without orientation or sufficiently gradual induction can result only in failure. Just as the teacher assumes the responsibility for introducing new subject matter, so one must stimulate the group to a conscious desire to experiment with this class procedure. Just as one leads from the known to the unknown in all teaching that is psychologically sound, so in developing the small group conference one builds on what the children know of life situations involving discussion in its more informal aspects.

When the children have come to feel a need for greater power in conversation one is ready to begin. One teacher successful in the use of this procedure used it first as the closing step in literature lessons pertaining to the study of the short story. The discussion of the plot and the interpretation of the stories was carried on as a group. Then, as the final step in the lesson, the teacher divided the class into convenient small mixed groups of boys and girls and gave them for discussion topics related both to current life and to some aspect of the story discussed that day. For example, after reading the account of his schooling in Hamlin Garland's *Boy Life on the Prairie*, the class period closed with small groups discussing the topic, "What are the most significant differences between Garland's school life and ours?"

At first the periods for the small group conferences were very short; they were gradually increased in length as the group grew in power to sit in informal circles and exchange ideas on interesting topics of educational value.

In setting up this procedure the teacher had to make sure that everyone observed the following points: (1) That effort to express all ideas in adequate English be made, and that pupils were to help each other courteously with speech errors. (2) That before the period was over everyone would have contributed to the discussion. (3) That general courtesy at all times prevail.

Sometimes the informal small group discussion served as an end in itself, but, though the teacher moved from group to group, at times he wished to get pupil reactions to the discussions. Two methods served well here. Following the small group discussions, reporters were chosen from the various groups to give the rest of the class the gist of their conversations. A second method used to check the individual's contributions to the conversation was that in which each member was asked to rate the members of his group (including himself) on the basis of who best contributed to the conversation of the group. Both types of check-up proved stimulating to the class.

This teaching procedure has been found to be well adapted to use in the upper grades since the idealism of normal adolescence plays a significant part in its ultimate success. Basic to the art of conversation—and hence to the small group conference—are fair play, co-operation, friendliness, kindness, and many other related virtues which make such strong appeals to adolescents. Here, also, is an opportunity to teach the etiquette of conversation. The alert teacher constantly aids the children in interpreting what takes place in the small group. Accom-

Letter-Writing as Composition

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SURELY NOTHING in all the field of English teaching is more difficult than composition, or more unsatisfactory. To descend to the lowest level of thought concerning composition, it does seem as if prospective writers should know something of punctuation and form and it does seem too that punctuation marks should mean the same to you and to me and to everyone, in order that we may understand other people and make ourselves understood. Yet, among older students and adult writers, no one seems to have any very definite idea about so simple a thing as a comma, and the semicolon has no meaning whatever. These and other difficulties in composition arise partly, I suppose, because of poor teaching and partly, no doubt, because the students are not interested in the matter. A stereotyped exercise in composition is surely as uninspiring as anything that could be imagined. How many of us have not the memory of precious hours spent in laborious composition work that meant nothing at all and taught us nothing at all?

But there is one form of composition which, it seems to me, is worth a good deal of work—a form which all the children in any group are sure to use—letter-writing. And, since this is the *only* form that most of them will use, it seems that it should receive much attention. How many women ever write anything except grocery lists and letters, and how many men write anything at all? Perhaps, if more attention were given to letter-writing, something might be added to the sum-total of human happiness. Is it not

true that many families would receive much pleasure from real letters from absent members—especially the men, who, if they write at all, give merely a few bald statements about their activities, rarely anything that reveals their thoughts and interests—their personalities? It is through letters that much of family life may be given to lonely parents and other sympathetic relatives.

In giving letter-writing such a prominent place in the language work, it is not at all necessary to neglect other kinds of writing. The body of the letter is just composition, is it not? Is there any reason why it cannot involve any kind of writing? With proper motivation, a letter written at a given time might include a description of winter sports, at one level or another, depending on the age and interests of those concerned, or an explanation of some process in another course, if exposition were to be written. Incidents or conversation may be involved. Even the mind-training which argumentation gives can be employed in a letter. Of course the teacher would know what sort of subject matter to suggest for the particular group she is working with, and she can unobtrusively direct them as she wishes them to go.

Of course, no letter should be written into thin air. There are always occasions which may be seized as provocations for letters. A child is ill or absent for some other reason. Some one in the school or in the community has done a kindness for the class. The teacher wishes a catalogue or the class has money for a book. The children can write to relatives and take

the letters home to be sent or not, as the family decide. When the whole class writes the same letter, naturally one must be chosen to be sent. The inevitable choosing of one letter to be so honored is as good an incentive to write well as the positive knowledge that every letter is to be sent. And the teacher need not always choose the same child's letter. It must be possible to find different good points in different letters. The amount of improvement is a reason for choosing, often.

One kind of note everyone needs to practice is a note of thanks. After Christmas there is ample opportunity for lessons on this kind of letter. Actual gifts can be acknowledged, and the letters sent from the children's homes. Acknowledgment of hospitality should be the subject of some work in this field, too.

Small children would do better to write on whatever paper they are accus-

tomed to use. An older person can address the envelope. However, as soon as the children are proficient enough, they should practice writing their own addresses and those of their correspondents. Oblongs of paper, ruled or cut, help in this practice. Details such as the return address, should be given proper consideration as should the proper folding of the paper to fit the envelope. There is no reason why details of this kind should not receive sufficient attention so that letters received will be found properly placed in the envelope.

Examples of letters that interest children of all ages are available. Imaginary ones suitable for children are printed in many children's books, but real ones are not hard to find. The letters in Helen Keller's *The Story of My Life* and in Theodore Roosevelt's *Letters to His Children* are interesting and helpful.

TEACHING CONVERSATION THROUGH THE CONFERENCE

(Continued from page 102)

panying instruction in vocabulary, logical sentence sequence, and such other objectives in language growth are meaningful social objectives related to the art of conversation. For example, pupils are led to ask: What of the person who monopolizes the stage and steals the show? What of the one who dominates the thought, who cannot see another's point of view? What of the person who never contributes to the conversation, who is content only to listen? These, and such related life values as the development of poise, adaptability, the ability to see and interpret another's point of view, can be met and coped with in the small group conference. As textbook lessons they never can be more than "Do's" or "Do Nots," but in practice, they are seen as aspects

of one's successful use of language and general cultural development.

As a teaching procedure the small group conference is still in the experimental stage, but those who are employing it are discovering increasingly its merits and values. That its use can contribute to the socialization of the group cannot be doubted. That it is an instrument valuable in the development of the concepts of co-operation and the benefits of the exchange of divergent thoughts seems also obvious. And, finally, to the teacher who is interested in making the work of the English classroom a more nearly life-like situation, this teaching procedure makes a strong appeal. The small group conference is a step toward the "humanization" of English.

Opportunities for Incidental Language Teaching

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THIS STUDY OF incidental language situations was launched in order to ascertain what opportunities arise for teaching language in classes other than English. It is the purpose of this article to set forth the numerous situations for English expression and instruction that were found to arise daily in the classroom, and thereby to demonstrate whether or not language work need and should be limited to formal periods. If we may judge by their practice, many teachers apparently think that the language work should be restricted to English periods, that technicalities and standards should not be emphasized in other subjects. All too little consideration has been given to the many situations that arise daily for the teaching of language throughout the school program.

The technique of the study was simple. It consisted of daily observation in the third and sixth grades, and the keeping of a diary of (1) expressional situations that arose and (2) the attention paid to language techniques during lessons other than English. The time used in observation ranged from two to four hours a day. The teachers were not conscious that this investigation was being made, since they understood only one of the purposes of the observation; namely, getting acquainted with teaching procedures.

* Miss Verner is a graduate student in education who has developed an interesting technique for determining the language-expressional situations that arise outside the English period. This technique should be especially valuable for teachers who wish to evaluate their English-teaching in an integrated program where English is made a part of every subject and does not receive isolated attention. *Mildred A. Dawson*, Sponsor.

There were many instances that arose for the teaching of language and a considerable body of data was collected. The second phase of this study was the organization and classification of data. These were found to fall readily into a few classifications: technicalities and standards; discussion and giving reports; story-telling and dramatization; letter-writing and memoranda. This survey includes both the oral and written work of the pupils.

Table I presents the technicalities and standards that were mentioned in the third and sixth grades.

TABLE I
SITUATIONS INVOLVING LANGUAGE TECHNICALITIES
AND STANDARDS IN CLASSES OTHER
THAN ENGLISH

<i>Technicalities</i>	Frequencies		Rank		Order	
	Grade III	Grade VI	Grade III	Grade VI	Grade III	Grade VI
Pronunciation	80	33	1	1		
Enunciation	26	5	5	7		
Parts of Speech	28	10	4	5		
Constructions	46	28	2	2		
Voice Inflection	10	0	7.5	8		
Punctuation	29	10	3	5		
Capitalization	10	10	7.5	5		
Manuscript Form	20	19	6	3		
<i>Standards</i>						
Talking to Audience	60	32	1	2		
Manners	52	36	2	1		
Class Work	22	17	3	3		

Technicalities were stressed more than any of the other classifications, as can be noted by reading the number of frequencies. Situations for the teaching of tech-

nicalities occurred in many instances, particularly in conversation, correction, and blackboard work. It is interesting to note the comparison by their rank order. Pronunciation and the use of construc-

TABLE II
SITUATIONS ARISING FOR DISCUSSION AND GIVING
REPORTS IN CLASSES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

<i>Discussion</i>	Frequencies		Rank Order	
	Grade III	Grade VI	Grade III	Grade VI
Stand. of Work	14	17	2	2
Stand. of Verbal				
Expression	6	2	6	9
Stand. of Conduct	6	3	6	8
Stand. of Health	10	14	3	3
Stand. of Artistic				
Arrangement	4	5	9	7
Class Plans	24	17	1	2
Excursions	4	0	9	10.5
Current Events	4	6	9	6
Home Activities	7	6	4	6
Specimens Brought				
from Home	6	0	6	10.5
Research Topics	0	12	10	4
<i>Giving Reports</i>				
Class Activities	6	14	1	2
Book Reports	0	7	5	4
Excursions	4	0	2	6
Research Work	0	10	5	3
Current Topics	0	3	5	5
Home Activities	3	30	3	1

tions ranked highest in both grades.

The work of the two grades in compiling their own standards compares favorably. As the lower grade is more inexperienced, there is apparently need for setting up more standards on how to act, particularly on how to talk to an audience. This is the type of training the young people need in developing their expressional ability and in aiding them, not only in all phases of school work, but also in their activities outside the classroom. Courtesy played an essential part in the education of the young people and was stressed constantly in both of these grades; therefore, standards for good manners are found to rank second.

Throughout the day standards for class work were set up. They fell into three types: standards for the day (particular exercises), and for the week (specific projects), and permanent standards that extend the entire school year.

In Table II are given the types of discussion and of reports that were found to be most popular. There is a marked similarity between the types of discussion used in the grades.

Both grades showed aptness in expressional ability. They took a great delight in discussing their class activities and their standards of work. Here we find an overlapping with Table I in the standards of work, thus demonstrating that not only do these standards have to be set up, but also they must be discussed to bring about understanding and interest on the part of the pupils.

Since they were more advanced, the sixth graders led in research topics and current events. Likewise, the sixth grade led in giving reports. Having had more training, they delighted in communicating their acquired knowledge to their classmates. Reports of home and class activities were stressed, and they also showed a desire to tell their classmates about the books that they had read and the topics that they had learned about through research work. These reports were excellent opportunities for training the pupils in such expressional abilities as the relating of actual information in a well organized fashion, and in a pleasing and suitable manner. Clearness and correctness were emphasized. Here again is found an overlapping because technicalities such as pronunciation, and the correct parts of speech are included.

Table III presents for the reader other phases of the expressional abilities of pupils. Story-telling and dramatization, of course, demonstrate the abilities of individual pupils. The third grade preferred to relate stories of enjoyable per-

sonal experiences; they also showed a marked preference for Bible stories. The sixth grade was eager to relate their experience stories, stressing both their class and personal experiences. This field is one in which initiative and originality can play a part, and the children's sharing accounts of unique situations contributes toward developing personality.

Dramatization played a very minor part in the activities of these two classrooms. Subject to limited data, the following interpretations seem valid. The

TABLE III

SITUATIONS INVOLVING STORY-TELLING AND
DRAMATIZATION IN CLASSES OTHER
THAN ENGLISH

	Frequencies		Rank Order	
	Grade	Grade	Grade	Grade
	III	VI	III	VI
<i>Story-Telling</i>				
Bible Stories	4	0	2	5
Experience Stories (Class)	2	5	3.5	1
Personal Experiences	6	4	1	2
Current Interest	2	3	3.5	3
Information	1	1	5	4
<i>Dramatization</i>				
Dramatization of Process	2	2	1	2
Preparation for Class Performance	0	7	2	1

dramatization interests of both groups were similar. The sixth grade ranked highest in this case because they were preparing for an assembly. Dramatization of processes, such as the use of apparatus, rated equally in both grades.

In Table IV can be found the situations involving written expression that arose from letter-writing and memoranda. In this field of letter writing, one finds the sixth grade excelling. This upper grade showed particular interest in letters to other classes and letters seeking information. Letter-writing is a field that

stresses both the technical side and expressional ability. It includes capitalization, punctuation, the correct manuscript form, and good vocabulary.

TABLE IV

SITUATIONS INVOLVING LETTER-WRITING AND
MEMORANDA IN CLASSES OTHER THAN
ENGLISH

	Frequencies		Rank Order	
	Grade	Grade	Grade	Grade
	III	VI	III	VI
<i>Letter-Writing</i>				
Class Letter	2	3	1	1
Invitation to Parents	1	1	2	3.5
Appreciation	0	1	3.5	3.5
Information	0	2	3.5	2
<i>Memoranda</i>				
Preparation for Writing Story	2	3	4	2
Preparation for News Letter	1	2	5	3.5
Preparation for Making Booklet	4	0	2.5	5
Plans for Days	8	7	1	1
Plans for Week	4	2	2.5	3.5

The third grade led in listing their plans for each day and week. Before either class would start a project, the pupils would organize and make definite plans. This practice had a definite advantage because it gave the pupils a perspective and motivated outlook and encouraged them to do thorough planning before undertaking a task.

The results that have been tabulated should suggest to teachers the numerous instances that arise daily for the teaching of language in classes other than English. In practically every class activity these opportunities occur, and it is the responsibility of the teacher to take advantage of them. Her doing so tends to unify the school program of work and aids in breaking away from the old type of formal education in which the pupil thinks that only in English class is he held responsible for using correct English.

Editorial

Abandonment Is No Solution

IT HAS BEEN some years, now, since educators, stirred by the philosophy of a new freedom in education, looked critically at grammar, and saw that it was hard to teach, dull to both instructor and pupil, and not a very effective instrument for improving speech and writing. Values claimed for it were disciplinary, and discipline, in the Nineteenth Century sense, had become an object of ridicule.

As a result, for the past fifteen years grammar has been pushed out the door in an increasing number of courses of study. The substitution of "functional grammar" has concealed this leave-taking, to some extent, but a search through present-day curricula will fail to reveal the stern old science that demanded the learning of rules, the parsing of verbs, and the diagraming of sentences.

Although the abandonment of formal grammar was regarded as a wise step, it is apparent that its deletion from the course of study has not achieved all that was hoped for in the improvement of expression. Pupils didn't do very well with grammar; it now appears that they don't do very well without it.

Applying the logic that led to the jettisoning of formal grammar, some school systems are now throwing overboard the whole language course, teaching language, they assure us, but only incidentally. Their arguments are persuasive. A great deal of time has been given to the teaching of composition with such indifferent results that it appears to be time wasted. Children have been called on to write "themes" on subjects of little or no interest to them. Language is not a content subject, but a skill. Like grammar, language is hard

for pupils, and tiresome for teachers.

All quite true.

But the abandonment of the separate language study course, and the substitution of the incidental teaching of language skills in connection with other studies, invites some grave consequences.

In the first place, the incidental teaching of usage may result, in practice, in no teaching at all. As Miss Cotner pointed out in an article on "English in the Integrated Program" (February, 1937), "When English is portrayed as an incidental or accidental subject in the fused program, it suffers as much loss as would the social studies if there were no definite plan and continuity in themes presented for study. The course of study in composition is likely to become only a label when it is incidental. . . ." The stronger and livelier the interest in the subject matter, the weaker and more languid the interest in the mode of expression. It would hardly be good pedagogy to interrupt a child in the midst of an enthusiastic and interesting report with the observation, "You used 'it don't,' Frank. What should you have said?"

In the second place, the fact that children speak and write poorly in spite of much teaching does not mean that they will do better without any teaching.

There is no denying that language teaching needs improvement. The constant tinkering with this subject during the past two decades alone is an indication that something is wrong. But let us *improve* language teaching—not abandon it. "Make every class a language class," by all means, but keep the language course too. Language is too fundamental to be taught incidentally.

Shop Talk

MULTIPLE COMPOSITION

ADULTS OF MY ACQUAINTANCE have too often remarked that language was their most difficult subject in school. If the average person recalls his experiences in the elementary grades, I feel certain that he will remember language as having been something barren and forbidding, daring him to become interested in its precise rules. Remember that hour, each day, when we used to take out our grammars and delve unhappily into the unexciting realms of capitals, periods, and quotation marks? Seldom were we given the opportunity to use this cold knowledge in an interesting manner. Compositions were artificial, stilted. There seemed to be no need for them in our lives, except to prove that various marks of punctuation could be used, after all.

Today, children are taught to see the necessity for a knowledge of language techniques through the natural occurrence of definite situations.

Language methods can be surprisingly varied and enriched. During the school year, my fourth grade pupils carry on several units of work in science and social studies. They prepare and give oral reports on these subjects, and do a certain amount of creative writing in connection with them. Other activities include book reports, letter writing, and a reading club which gives opportunities for oral reading, and for writing the secretary's reports.

The place of language in science will be discussed first because my pupils have found this field especially fascinating.

At present, we are studying a unit entitled "The Work of the Wind." Our "Science Corner" in the class-room is devoted to all the material for the development of this subject.

While the class observed carefully, one boy performed an experiment which proved that wind was moving air. Then each child wrote his story of what he saw. Needless to say, this experiment held the attention of every child and no further motivation was necessary for writing up the observation.

In the "Science Corner" we have a series of illustrations drawn by various children on the same subject. These drawings are explained in stories written by the pupils. This proved to be an excellent incentive for carefully written compositions and the pupils are making individual booklets of their own stories and illustrations.

Social studies offer a most desirable field for language study. As we travel on our imaginary trip around the world in the fourth grade, we take

"photographs" for our "Journey Album" by drawing pictures of scenes that especially interest us. A story is written to explain the photograph.

Different countries offered various impressions for "photographs" and stories. The "Album" is continued throughout the year. Interest is maintained in it at all times because new ideas are abundant in new countries.

Oral reports pertaining to "Our Trip Around the World" give the children a very good opportunity to develop a sense of responsibility in the preparation of material, and discrimination in selecting only facts which concern the topic. Children usually work in groups of ten, headed by a capable pupil chairman who listens to the material prepared and offers helpful suggestions.

References are listed on a bulletin board for consultation. After a pupil has presented his report, the class is permitted to contribute any facts of importance which he may have omitted.

Next comes the broad field of creative writing. Naturally, we do not expect a great deal from fourth-graders; but do we try to get all that we can? While we were visiting Switzerland during our imaginary "Trip Around the World," we wrote a play together, each pupil offering some contribution toward its development. True, I organized the material but the main ideas and facts were given by the children. In it we had a definite plot, dances, and songs. One afternoon, we gave it in costume, inviting the parents and school officials to attend. There is no need for me to say that many phases of language were used in the developing and completing of this unit on Switzerland.

Every Friday afternoon, we have a Reading Club which is conducted according to parliamentary procedure; the president takes charge, while the secretary writes the minutes of each meeting in detail. A weekly oral reading contest is held at which each child is given the opportunity to read, or recite on any interesting topic, or story. The winner of the contest is chosen by the class. These points are used for judging: (1) Was the topic well-chosen? (2) Was the audience interested? (3) Did he express himself well? (4) Did he speak clearly? (5) Were the words pronounced correctly? (6) Did he have poise?

The secretary's report is mounted in a large class book each week. From this, the secretary reads the last report at the beginning of every meeting. The innovation of this club procedure has done much to help the children master the art of public speaking and to help them realize the importance of

knowing how to write a secretary's report.

At the front of our class-room we have a series of large illustrations mounted under the sign, "New Books We All Know." Only when every child in the class has read a certain book is an illustration of it hung in this place. Each child then writes a book report for his own collection of illustrations which he keeps up through the school year.

Only when you have tried this procedure with your own class will you be able to realize how enthusiastic children can be to put their own thoughts on paper. It is only natural for them to want to write about a story that was exciting.

There is no need for me to say very much about letter-writing, except that the necessity for it should be impressed upon the children. A vital need for it can be shown by: (1) Writing letters to a sick class-mate; (2) Sending for travel material; (3) Writing to friends during the summer; (4) Inviting parents to school exhibitions and plays; (5) Inviting other class-rooms to a party; (6) Sending for free health material.

A child obtains a great deal of satisfaction when he finds a pamphlet waiting for him in the mail-box, especially when he has written for it himself.

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BASED ON SCIENCE

ONE MONDAY, our science teacher, Mr. Bent, taught a fifth grade class three facts about air. He performed three experiments to prove them. On Tuesday, the English teacher based her composition lesson on the science lesson of the previous day.

The procedure in the English class followed these principles of composition: (1) Oral work always precedes written work. (2) The teacher anticipates as many errors as possible before and during the writing period of the lesson. (3) The composition work is aided by some visual work on the blackboard. (4) During the actual writing, there is absolute quiet in the room. (5) The teacher corrects all papers that night, indicates all errors, and returns them to their owners the next day. All mistakes are corrected by the pupils themselves in class. (6) The time-distribution of the 40-minute period is: 20 minutes for oral discussion; 15 minutes for writing; 5 minutes for reading aloud and self-correction.

The two major steps of the lesson were, first, a discussion and collection of the facts learned about air, and second, a clearly written explanation of the learnings. These two steps served a number of instructional purposes: to clarify the science lesson; to enable the pupils to express themselves clearly; to enable pupils to write coherent, unified paragraphs;

to encourage the use of transitional words ("word-hinges," the teacher called them) between paragraphs; and finally, to encourage the use of the newly-learned scientific words.

This last objective, the enlargement of vocabulary, was called to the attention of the pupils by a number of questions. What is an *experiment*? What other terms did Mr. Bent use? (As the pupils recalled the scientific terms used, the teacher wrote them on the board. Words given were: *air pressure*, *vacuum*, H_2O , *oxidation*, *exerts*, *occupies space*.) What did Mr. Bent do to prove that air exerts pressure? Give an example of your own. In what other ways have you heard of a vacuum?

The teacher explained that many facts in science were expressed in symbols, by letters and figures. For example, H_2O was a symbol for water. Pupils were told that in their papers on these experiments, they might use the symbol, H_2O , instead of the word "water." The teacher further clarified the word *experiment* by asking whether Mr. Bent merely told what he thought about air. "What is the difference between thinking and proving?" the teacher asked. "What would you say an experiment in science is, then?"

A review of the experiment served to introduce outlining. The pupils were asked to tell what was learned in the science lesson. As facts were given, they were written on the board by the teacher in simple outline form.

The children were familiar with the word *paragraph*. The teacher explained further that *para* means "like," and *graph*, "writing." *Autograph* and *geography* were cited as examples of words built upon the root, *graph*. "Now," said the teacher, "since a paragraph should have in it only similar or like material, how many do we need to tell about the lesson on air?" It was decided that three paragraphs would be necessary.

The last question to be discussed before the actual writing was the use of transition words. The teacher asked, "What connects a door to the wall, yet allows it to swing back and forth? We have the same need in connecting our paragraphs, if we want them to swing smoothly in thought." The words or groups of words that serve paragraphs as hinges do doors the teacher designated "word-hinges." The children suggested groups of these, such as "First . . . Second . . . Third." "In the first experiment . . . Then . . . Last."

The actual writing was preceded by an inquiry as to whether there were further questions, and the invitation to ask for necessary help. The teacher called attention to the dictionary on her desk, and reminded the pupils to write legibly, to leave a wide margin at the left, and to capitalize the title as shown on the blackboard. During the writing, the

teacher moved about the room, answering questions and pointing out mistakes as her eye caught them.

The compositions completed, two or three were read aloud to the group by the writers. Before the teacher collected the papers, she asked the children to check their work with the help of questions. "Is my name on the paper? Is the title correctly capitalized? Do I have three paragraphs? Have I used any terms new to me? Have I connected my paragraphs, or are they jerky?"

The teacher corrected the papers and returned

them the following morning. In addition to marking errors, she commented briefly on each composition: "Good paragraphing here"; "Are your sentences rather long?" "Excellent vocabulary"; "You have three solid paragraphs, but could you follow your own directions?"

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TEACHING THE LANGUAGE ARTS

(Continued from page 97)

One other change in the program apparently contributed to the general improvement in the language arts. Out of the language situations within the social studies classes there were noted frequently individual pupils who needed extra practice and more individual instruction in order to cope satisfactorily with regular classroom procedures. One pupil might, because of frequent absence or for some other reason, be unable to read as well as all the available evidence indicated he should. Another pupil with normal general mental ability for some reason might be so lacking in the rudiments of sentence sense that he was wholly incapable of meeting the everyday demands for oral and written language. A pupil in the upper grades might be unable to write even a short letter without misspelling many much used words. Without the slightest intention of bringing any pupil up to any grade expectancy, a special period (frequently referred to as "extra practice period," "drill period," "fixation period," and sometimes even "remedial period") and a capable teacher were scheduled for the purpose of bringing up to a level in keeping with their own general potentialities some of the language arts abilities which pupils

lacked and for which they had need.

In a few schools organized on the grade "unit" plan with one teacher in charge of all subjects, the same general plan was followed. All the language arts teaching, with the exception of that for recreatory reading, was done in connection with the social studies experiences. A special period was planned for a recreatory reading program and another for individualized extra practice on language arts disabilities.

The goals of this approach to the teaching of language arts could be easily stated. The actual outcomes, however, as viewed at the present time are more difficult to define. There is ample evidence, objective as well as subjective, that the pupil has greater general ability in the language arts; that he thinks more and communicates his thoughts in a better manner; that he is more able to solve a problem by reading and study; that he is more able and has more desire to gain pleasure and recreation through reading. Only after much planning and experimentation, and after the boys and girls in school today have gone into many different language environments, will we be able to judge this different approach to the teaching of the language arts.

Teachers College Record ALL-ENGLISH NUMBER

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